

PISHKUN, WILLOW CREEK, BENTON LAKE
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

January 1 - April 30, 1956 .

REFUGE PERSONNEL

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Charlo, Montana

PISHKUN, WILLOW CREEK, BENTON LAKE
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES
Narrative Report
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I. GENERAL

- A. Weather Conditions. Following is a table showing the weather data as reported by the official weather bureau station in Choteau, Montana. This is the closest weather station to these refuges.

1956	Snowfall	Precipitation	Max. Temp.	Min. Temp.
January	7.0"	.33	53	-19
February	3.5"	.17	52	-26
March	3.5"	.09	67	-16
April		.68	73	-17
Total	14.0"	1.27	Extremes 73	-26

From all reports received from this area there appears to be a rather sharp shortage of water throughout the entire Eastern half of Montana. The snowfall was unusually light and the runoff left much to be desired.

- B. Water Conditions. The following tables give an indication of the fluctuations of water levels on the two reservoirs during this period for the past several years.

PISHKUN

End of:	1956	1955	1954	1953	1952	1951	Mean
January	4360.0	4362.5	4363.2	4361.1	4365.4	4361.9	4362.35
February	4360.0	4362.5	4363.1	4360.9	4365.2	4361.8	4362.25
March	4359.7	4362.0	4362.0	4360.7	4365.0	4361.8	4361.87
April		4362.5	4363.0	4362.6	4365.3	4361.9	

Crest of Spillway: 4374.0 Bottom of Outlet: 4342.0

WILLOW CREEK

End of:	1956	1955	1954	1953	1952	1951	Mean
January	4138.0	4136.2	4137.1	4132.7	4135.4	4135.4	4135.80
February	4138.0	4136.5	4137.8	4132.9	4136.0	4135.9	4136.20
March	4139.1	4137.0	4138.2	4134.0	4137.1	4137.5	4137.15
April	4137.1	4137.5	4138.6	4139.1	4138.1	4138.3	

Crest of Spillway: 4142.0 Bottom of outlet: 4085.0

Benton Lake

This area was visited on March 28th by Refuge Manager Schwartz. He reports that the Spring runoff was virtually non-existent and that the water level in the lake has dwindled considerably from last Fall's levels. It seems likely that this water body will dry up completely this Summer unless an unusually rainy Spring season develops.

Casual observations by Mr. Schwartz indicated there were between 50 and 75 Canada Geese, several hundred ducks, and an undetermined number of shore birds present.

OTHER ITEMS.

A preliminary survey to determine the probable cost of developing Benton Lake was started by personnel of the Branch of Engineering during the month of March. Field work on this job was completed during the fore part of April.

An early spring range survey was made by Mr. Watson E. Beed at Pishkun and Willow Creek. His findings showed very good grazing conditions could be expected for the coming season. Mr. Beed suggested the carrying capacity and grazing season for these two areas, and they were accepted by the stockmen's Assn., who graze cattle on these refuges.

Respectfully submitted.

May 7, 1956


Grover F. Elgan, Refuge Manager

Approved: _____ Date: _____
John E. Schwartz, Refuge Manager

Approved: _____ Date: _____
Regional Director
Fish and Wildlife Service
Region One, Portlans, Oregon